

25

Arakkheyya Sutta

The Discourse on No Need to Hide | A 7.55 (A:B 7.58)

Theme: The Buddha has nothing to hide

Translated by Piya Tan ©2017

[For meanings of abbreviations in the citations (without the SD prefixes—Be, Ce, Ee, Se, etc), see PTS editions of Aṅguttara vols 1-3.]

1 Sutta summary and highlights

1.1 THE ARAKKHEYYA SUTTA TEACHINGS. In the **Arakkheyya Sutta** (A 7.55), the Buddha declares that there are 4 things that he does not have to hide (*arakkheyya*) and 3 things about which he is irreproachable (*anupavajja*). The 4 things that he does not have to hide are (1) his bodily deeds, (2) his speech, (3) his thoughts and (4) his livelihood—they are all purified. The 3 things about which he is irreproachable are:

- (5) that he, as **teacher**, has well taught the Dharma;
- (6) that he has well proclaimed the **teaching** to his disciples the way leading to the destruction of the influxes;
- (7) that his assemblies comprise a great number of **well-taught** disciples who have destroyed their influxes.¹

Since the Buddha sees no such justified grounds for any accusation against him otherwise, he dwells accomplished in **security, fearlessness and intrepidity** (*khema-p, patto abhaya-p, patto vesārajja-p, patto*).²

1.2 THE KAKUDHA THERA SUTTA (A 5.100). Note that these teachings are located in the “Book of Sevens” (*sattaka nipāta*) of the Aṅguttara. The seven are, of course, the 4 *arakkheyya* (“not hidden”) and the 3 *anupavajja* (“blame-free”). Interestingly, neither of these sets form their own separate sutta anywhere else in the Pali canon. However, the first tetrad—the 4 qualities about which the Buddha has nothing to hide—parallels the **Kakudha Thera Sutta** (A 5.100).

Kakudha Koliya,putta was a monk who was Moggallāna’s personal attendant. He dies while in dhyana and is reborn as a brahma—hence, the Sutta title. It records his visit to Moggallāna, bringing him news of **Devadatta’s** efforts to take over the order. The sutta also describes the 5 kinds of teachers who are impure in conduct, livelihood, what Dhamma they teach, how they teach it, and their knowledge and vision—and the support of their disciples out of love for gain.³

1.3 RELATED TEXTS**1.3.1 The Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33)

1.3.1.1 The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) lists the 3 things about which the Buddha has nothing to hide. He is fully pure in bodily conduct (*parisuddha kaya, samācāra*), in speech (*parisuddha vacī, samācāra*) and in thought (*parisuddha mano, samācāra*). The Buddha has done no unwholesome action through these 3 doors so as to think, “Let no one know about this!” (D 33,1.10(30)/3:217)

¹ See (1.2.3.1 (10) n).

² Cf A 4.8,2 etc, SD 51.19.

³ A 5.100/3:122-126 (SD 54.9). On the Sutta opening and the 5 kinds of teachers, see also V 2:185-187.

1.3.1.2 Interestingly, the Saṅgīti Sutta list does not mention the 4th *arakkheyya*—that of the Buddha’s purity of livelihood. It is possible that the set of 3 *arakkheyyāni* is the older set, to which was later added the 4th, on the purity of livelihood. This teaching is based on that of the 3 karmic doors of speech, body and mind.⁴

1.3.2 The Sarabha Sutta (A 3.64)

The Sarabha Sutta (A 3.64) lists the 3 intrepidities (*vesārajja*) of the Buddha—as the arhat’s perfect maturity and self-confidence—that none prove these (summarized) to be false, which are compared to the 3 *anupavajjā* listed in **the Arakkheyya Sutta**, thus:

The 3 intrepidities (*vesārajja*): Sarabha Sutta (A 3.64), SD 51.23

- (1) that the Buddha is fully self-awakened;
- (2) that the Buddha has not destroyed all his mental influxes; and
- (3) that the practice of the Dharma does not lead to the destruction of suffering.

The 3 unblameables (*anupavajja*): Arakkheyya Sutta (A 7.55), SD 51.25

- (1) the Buddha has well taught the Dharma;
- (2) the Dharma leading to nirvana is well-taught and efficacious;
- (3) the noble sangha comprises those who have destroyed their mental influxes.⁵

Clearly, these two lists are both describing the authenticity of the Teacher and the efficacy of his teaching. The 3rd *arakkheyya* of the Arakkheyya Sutta, however, specifically states the beneficiaries and exemplars of the teaching, that is, the noble sangha.⁶

1.3.3 The Vinaya.

1.3.3.1 Chapter 9 of the Culla Vagga of the Vinaya deals with “the suspension of the Pātimokkha,” that is, the fortnightly recital of the monastic codes. As part of the teachings, the Buddha informs Upāli, the Vinaya expert, that when reproofing others of these 5 things, he should examine his own 5 qualities, that is:

- (1) “Am I quite pure in bodily conduct?”
- (2) “Am I quite pure in verbal conduct?”
- (3) “Is a heart of lovingkindness, free of ill will, towards my fellow brahmacharis,⁷ established in me?”
- (4) “Am I well learned?”
- (5) “Are both the Pātimokkhas properly handed down to me?” (Cv 9.5.1 @ V 2:248 f)

1.3.3.2 Of these 5 points for blaming or reproof (*codanā*), only the first two are identical to those of the 4 *arakkheyyāni* [§2]. The 3rd point of reproof is the same as the 3rd *arakkheyya* as the karmic door of the mind. While the *arakkheyya* is broad in its purview, the *codanā* specifically mentions a “heart of lovingkindness” (*metta ... cittaṃ*). Any reproof of others should be done with lovingkindness. The 5th point

⁴ On the 3 doors of karma, see SD 29.6a (1.1).

⁵ There are the 3 influxes—*kāma’āsava*, *bhav’āsava* and *avijjāsava*—a common set in the suttas: SD 30.3 (1.3.2). Comys add a fourth—that of “views,” *diṭṭh’āsava*, as the 3rd—a set well known as the 4 “floods” (*ogha*) or “4 bonds” (*yoga*): see D 16,10.4 n (SD 9).

⁶ The noble sangha (*ariya,saṅgha*) refers to the community (*saṅgha*) or assemblies (*parisā*) of streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats, both monastic and lay. See **Aṭṭha,puggala 5** (A 8.63) SD 46.4; **Saṅghānus-sati**, SD 15.10a.

⁷ *Brahma,cārī*, one practising a celibate life, esp a monastic.

of reproof has to do with the Vinaya; hence, is not included in the sutta listing, but can be taken as implicit in the first three *arakkheyyāni*.

2 Sutta significance

2.1 THE 4 THINGS ABOUT WHICH THE BUDDHA HAS NOTHING TO HIDE

2.1.1 (1) The Buddha's actions

2.1.1.1 In the **Satta Jaṭila Sutta** (S 3.11), when king Pasenadi claims that certain ascetics who had just passed by are arhats, the Buddha replies that it is difficult for an unawakened person to know an arhat. However, we may know 4 qualities of a person—that is, his virtue (*sīla*), honesty (*soceyya*), fortitude (*thāma*)⁸ and wisdom (*paññā*)—in the following ways:

- (1) **through living together with another**, his virtue is known;
- (2) **through dealing⁹ with another**, his honesty is known;
- (3) **through adversities**, his fortitude [experiential strength] is known.
- (4) **through discussing with another**, his wisdom (*paññā*) is known, “and even,” adds the Buddha, “that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.”¹⁰ (S 3.11,8-11/1:78 f), SD 14.11

2.1.1.2 As regard knowing the Buddha's actions, he explains in the **Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47) how to do this. Without an ability to read minds, we can only observe and examine his action in two ways, that is, “by eye or by the ear.” By observing or by listening to him, we can deduce whether he has any defiled states or mixed states (both unwholesome and wholesome) or purified states.

He will notice that only *purified* states are found in the Buddha. Then, he should examine whether such states are only recent or for a long while there. And he will notice that they have been there *for a long time*. With further investigation, he will notice that the Buddha has won fame, but not disadvantaged by it in any way. Further, he will learn that the Buddha is restrained not because of fear but because he is *lust-free*.¹¹

Finally, we need to confirm all with the Buddha himself that our conclusions are right. The Sutta, at the start, assumes that we, the investigator, are unable to read minds. The point is that for one who is able to read minds, the answer is clearly obvious: he will know almost at once whether the Buddha is awakened or not.

⁸ Comys gloss *thāma* as “the strength of wisdom” (*ñāṇa, thāma*) (SA 1:150 = UA 333). We can explain this as “experiential strength,” meaning that it arises through the wisdom of our direct experience. It is def in **Thāna S** (A 4.192,4/2:188 f), SD 14.12.

⁹ “Through dealing with,” *saṃvoharena* (sg), ie through transactions (in business, etc) and working together (in a project, etc) (V 3:239; A 2:187 = S 1:78; A 3:77; SnA 471). A syn is *vohāra* (M 2:360; Sn 614; J 1:495, 2:133, 202, 5:471; PvA 111, 278). Comys (eg UA 332) qu a well known stanza from **Vāseṭṭha S** (M 98): “Whoever amongst man makes a living by trade (*vohāra*) | know him thus, Vāseṭṭha: he is a merchant, not a brahmin [priest]” (M 98/2:196 = Sn 614/119), qv for similar stanzas. Comy mentions 4 applications of vohāra: “trade” (*vāṇijja*) (Sn 614: see prec); as “intention” (*cetanā*), as in “the four noble modes of speech” (*ariya, vohāra*), ie abstinence from lying, slander, harsh speech and frivolous chatter (D 3:232); as a “description” (*paññatti*), as in “enumeration, designation, description, customary usage” (Dhs 1306); and “talk” as customary usage (*vohāra, mattena*, S 1:14 f) (UA 332 f).

¹⁰ Further details on these 4 points can be found in **Thāna S** (A 4.12/2:187-190), SD 14.12.

¹¹ M 47,4-10/1:318 f (SD 35.6).

The point here, I think, is that, if we are not awakened ourselves, how are we to know another awakened mind? Hence, we need the Buddha himself to confirm our findings—or, we learn to read minds by awakening ourselves as arhats! The challenge then, it seems is this: why don't you get awakened yourselves and see for yourselves!¹²

2.1.2 (2) The Buddha's speech

2.1.2.1 From the Buddha's teachings on right speech as recorded in **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58), we can deduce a very helpful knowledge of his speech. He speaks of 6 possible propositions when speaking, thus:

References pertain to **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58)

(1)	True	useful	pleasant	[\$8.6]	He would assert such a statement at a <u>proper time</u> .
(2)	"	"	unpleasant	[\$8.3]	He would assert such a statement at a <u>proper time</u> .
(3)	"	useless	pleasant	[\$8.5]	He would <i>not</i> assert such a statement.
(4)	"	"	unpleasant	[\$8.2]	He would <i>not</i> assert such a statement.
(5)	False	useful	pleasant	[-]	[Unlisted = false speech.]
(6)	"	"	unpleasant	[-]	[Unlisted = harsh speech.]
(7)	"	useless	pleasant	[\$8.4]	He would <i>not</i> assert such a statement.
(8)	"	"	unpleasant	[\$8.1]	He would <i>not</i> assert such a statement. ¹³

M 58,8/1:395 (SD 7.12 (3.2))

From this table, we can clearly deduce that the Buddha will *only* speak what is useful and true, whether *unpleasant* or *pleasant*. He will *not* utter any useless (frivolous) speech, whether true or false, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Interestingly, "false but useful speech" (that is, helpful lies) whether unpleasant or pleasant is not resorted to by the Buddha.

2.1.2.2 This is a vital point to remember [2.1.2.1]: early Buddhist conception of "**skillful means**" (*upāya*) is always truth-based: lying is unjustifiable even as skillful means. In post-Buddha Buddhist accounts of skillful means, we often see the use of "white lies"—untruth in the service of "good." A key problem here how "good" is defined. Either way—whether it is for good or bad—lying means licence and breaching the moral precept of truth-telling.¹⁴

Two common responses used by the Buddha when it is unhelpful to answer yes or no are: he would give some pleasant and inspiring teachings or he would remain silent. When queen Mallikā died and, on account of her last thought, was spending a brief spell in hell, when king Pasenadi asks him about her rebirth state, the Buddha resorts to the former response.¹⁵ On the other hand, the Buddha would be famously silent when any of the "10 questions" of speculative philosophy is asked.¹⁶

2.1.2.3 The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta (D 31) has a special term for a person who uses pleasant but useless speech, and false but useful and pleasant speech [2.1.2.1]: the "**sweet talker**," defined thus:

¹² On how to properly investigate a teacher, see SD 35.6 (3.2).

¹³ See Jayatilleke 1963:351 f.

¹⁴ SD 30.8 (5.3); SD 10.16 (3.5.3); SD 43.6 (2.3.4).

¹⁵ See **Mallikā Devī Vatthu** (DhA 11.6/3:119-123) :: DhA:B 2:340 n1; SD 42.14 (2.3).

¹⁶ See eg SD 44.1 (10). For a study, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1. On the 4 ways of rightly answering questions, see SD 44.1 (3.1.2).

The sweet talker, young houselord, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these 4 reasons:

- (a) He approves of your doing wrong.
- (b) He approves of your doing right (or disapproves of it, depending on what profits him).
- (c) He sings your praises to your face.
- (d) He runs you down behind your back.

For these 4 reasons, young houselord, the sweet talker should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend. (D 31,18/3:186), SD 4.1

2.1.2.4 An additional observation of a dishonest “sweet talker” or simply, a dishonest person, is given in **the Ṭhāna Sutta** (A 4.12), as follows:

Here, bhikshus, a person, through dealing with another, knows thus:

‘Indeed, this venerable one behaves in a certain way towards one. He behaves in a different way towards two; yet again differently with three; yet again differently with many. His earlier conduct differs from his later conduct.’¹⁷

This venerable one is impure [not transparent] in his conduct. This venerable one is not of pure conduct.’ (A 4.12,3a/2:188), SD 14.12

This is the kind of speech—such as that of the “sweet talker” [2.1.2.2]—that the Buddha will certainly avoid—and so should we.

2.1.3 (3) The Buddha’s thoughts

2.1.3.1 If we are unable to read minds ourself, there is no way we can know the Buddha’s thoughts. Hence, the unawakened—for any non-arhat—will never be able to really know the mind of a Buddha. Hence, it would be simply frivolous for any unawakened teacher to speak or write about the Buddha-mind or Buddha-heart. Or, perhaps, they are deluded into thinking that they are, in their own definition, already “enlightened,” to presume to define the Buddha’s mind.

However, this is not something impossible to know. It’s like some complex (or even some not so complex) mathematical equation that needs proving. We have no way of knowing it is correct unless and until we master mathematics ourself. Then, we have to work out the equation ourself to show that it is proven or not. It takes a saint to know another.¹⁸

As a useful aside, it should be noted that a key teaching of **the Parihāna Sutta** (A 10.55) is that even if we have no power to read another’s mind, we should at least work at reading our own mind!¹⁹

¹⁷ Apparently, he behaves one way in a private exchange, when he says one thing; but he behaves in a different way when in a group, when he says something quite different. In either case, he could be harbouring an ulterior motive.

¹⁸ See, eg, (**Saṅgha**) **Bala S** (A 9.5,6(4)), where the term *samān’attatā*, meaning “impartiality” or “compatibility,” is used (SD 2.21). The Buddha also obliquely discusses how we may know an arhat in **Satta Jaṭila S** (S 3.11), SD 14.11 [2.1.1.1]. In negative language, we may lightly say that “It takes a thief to catch a thief”! On the 4 ways of mind-reading (*ādesana, pāṭihāriya*), ie, through (1) body language, (2) speech, (3) thought-vibrations, and (4) meditation: see (**Pāṭihāriya**) **Saṅgārava S** (A 3.60,/1:170 f), SD 16.10; SD 27.5a (5.3.1). On mind-reading as psychic power (*ceto pariya,ñāṇa*), see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,93.2) SD 8.10 = 11.59; **Kevaḍḍha S** (SD 1.7 (1.4)) = ādesanā pāṭihāriya.

¹⁹ A 10.55,5/5:103 (SD 43.5).

2.1.3.2 The suttas record cases of other arhats—even devas, and occasionally, even Māra—who are able to read the Buddha’s mind. Besides arhats, these beings are reportedly capable of reading only the thoughts of others, but not their *minds*.²⁰

The **Māra Saṃyutta** (S 4) contains a number of suttas where Māra reads the Buddha’s thoughts, and making distracting remarks out of unwholesome motives:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---|
| • Tapo Kamma Sutta | S 4.1/1:103 | blames the Buddha for giving up austere practices; |
| • Rajja Sutta | S 4.20/1:116 | encourages the Buddha to take up world lordship; |
| • (Māra) Godhika Sutta | S 4.23/1:120 f | reads Godhika’s mind as he attempts suicide, and then blames the Buddha for it. |

2.1.3.3 The most famous case of a divine being reading the Buddha’s mind is the one recorded in the **Āyācana Sutta** (S 6.1/1:137), where the High God, Brahmā Sahampati, *reads the Buddha’s mind* as he is considering the difficulties of teaching the Dharma. Then, out of concern that the Buddha is hesitating to teach the Dharma, he appears before the Buddha, entreating him to teach the Dharma.²¹ Brahmā again appears in the same role in the **Cātumā Sutta** (M 67,8/1:458).²²

2.1.3.4 The elder **Anuruddha** is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks with the divine eye (*dibba, cakkhu*), the power of telepathy that includes mind-reading (*ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*).²³ The **Mahā, parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) records that when Ānanda thinks that the Buddha has attained final nirvana, corrects him by explaining that the Buddha is progressively going through the 4 form dhyanas, followed by the 4 formless attainments.

At this point, Ānanda thinks that the Buddha has indeed passed away. But Anuruddha says that he has attained the cessation of perception and feeling. Then, he emerges from it, goes downwards through the formless attainment and then through until the 1st dhyana, and then back to the 4th dhyana again. There, the Buddha finally passes away. These stages the Buddha passes through up and down are known as the “9 progressive abodes.”²⁴

2.1.4 (4) The Buddha’s livelihood

2.1.4.1 The Buddha, as our teacher, clearly serves as the ultimate exemplar, especially for monastics, on the proper “economic” conduct of a renunciant, that is, a monastic who is true to his vows of a simple money-free, celibate spiritual life dedicated to working for awakening in this life itself. “Economic” usually means “taking proper care of the home.” The renunciant has left the crowdedness of family life for the spaciousness of the spiritual life. The world, in fact, becomes his home, that is, a renunciant gives up a

²⁰ “Thought-reading” (*ādesana, pāṭihāriya*) refers only to the reading of another’s thoughts (the cognitive process) but not their emotional state (the affective process), which seems more difficult to do, due to their subtlety, variety and volatility. See SD 27.5a (5.3.2.2).

²¹ S 6.1/1:137 (SD 12.2).

²² M 67,8/1:458 (SD 34.7).

²³ See **Ceto, pariya S** (S 52.14), where Anuruddha declares that it is because he has successfully cultivated the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) (D 20; M 10: SD 13), that he wields the power of mind-reading (S 52.14/5:304), SD 92.12(4). Traditionally, this is the 3rd of the “6 superknowledges” (*cha-ḷ-abhiññā*), def in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2,93 f/1:79 f), SD 8.10. See SD 27.5a (5.3.2.2).

²⁴ On the Buddha, passing away upon emerging from the 4th dhyana, see SD 9 (9.10). The 9 progressive abodes (*nava anupubba, vihāra*) are the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments and cessation: see SD 8.4 (1.2) & SD 48.2 (3.6.3).

smaller *biological* family for a universal spiritual family, who now supports him with the basic necessities of life insofar as the renunciant properly lives a life of monastic right livelihood. [2.1.4.2]

A renunciant is a monk or a nun who has given up socioeconomic security for spiritual security. A true renunciant's life is right livelihood; right livelihood is a life of true renunciation. "Right" here means "not against the Dharma-Vinaya," and "livelihood" refers to the training and effort towards awakening in this life itself. Insofar as a monastic truly keeps to his express vows to be a renunciant—having nothing to do with worldliness, especially sex, power and money—to focus on his mental training for awakening in this very life, he is keeping to right livelihood. The Buddha exemplifies the apex of such a livelihood.²⁵

2.1.4.2 The monastic training and right livelihood are here one and the same process. The right livelihood of renunciants is embodied in the 4 kinds of morality, comprising **the 4 full purifications by way of moral virtue** (*catu,pārisuddhi sīla*), that is:²⁶

(1) restraint with regard to the monastic code	<i>pātimokkha,samvara sīla,</i>
(2) sense-restraint	<i>indriya,samvara,sīla,</i>
(3) full purification of livelihood	<i>ājīva,pārisuddhi sīla, and</i>
(4) moral virtue with regard to the 4 requisites	<i>paccaya,sannissita sīla.</i>

Keeping to this training, the monastic creates for himself the right conditions for his spiritual quest for awakening in this life itself. Even before he gains this goal of awakening, such a life is characterized by simplicity and freedom:

Here, just as a bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden, so, too, he is content with robes to protect his body²⁷ and with almsfood to maintain his belly, and wherever he goes, he takes only these with him.

(D 2,66/1:71= M 51,15/1:346 = 38,34/1:268 = 112,14/3:35 = A 4.198,10/2:209 f)²⁸

2.1.4.3 The Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta (Sn 1.4) is terse: a renunciant is not for sale. The Sutta is the Buddha's own testimony to a renunciant's right livelihood. The Buddha approaches a ploughman, Kasi Bhāra,dvāja, for alms, but the ploughman questions the Buddha as to why he deserves any alms at all: "As for me, recluse, I plough and sow, and having ploughed and sown, I eat" (Sn 13,11), meaning that he works for a living.

The Buddha replies that he, too, ploughs and sows, and having done so, eats thereof. When Bhāra,-dvāja challenges him again to show his plough and other tools of the trade, the Buddha famously replies with a poetic definition of a renunciant's right livelihood:

Faith is the seed, austerity the rain moral shame is the pole, the mind the yoke-tie,	wisdom is my yoke and plough, mindfulness my ploughshare and goad.
Guarded in body, guarded in speech, truth I make my weeding,	restrained is food for my belly, restraint [meekness] my unyoking.

²⁵ See **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8.

²⁶ See SD 37.8 (4).

²⁷ As in **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,66/1:71), SD 8.10.

²⁸ For "right livelihood for renunciants," see SD 37.8 (4).

Effort is my beast of burden,
it takes me, without turning back,

that brings me to release from bondage:
where one goes never more to sorrow.

Thus is this ploughing done:
When this ploughing is done,

it has the death-free [nirvana] as its fruit.
one is freed from all misery.

(Sn 77-80), SD 69.6

Then, the Buddha declares that a renunciant is “not for sale,” thus:

Whatever is sung over with verses is not proper to be taken by me—
this is not the way, brahmin, of those who truly see.

Buddhas reject what has been sung over with verses:

where there is Dharma, brahmin, this is the livelihood.

(Sn 81 = 480)

But with other food and drink serve
whose influxes²⁹ are destroyed,
For, this is the field

a fully-accomplished great seer
whose misconduct is calmed:
for those looking for merit.

(Sn 82 = 642 = 481)

(Sn 1.4), SD 69.6

The Commentary explains the compound *gāthā’bhigīta* as follows: “*Gāthā’bhigīta* means ‘sung over with verses,’ meaning that it is received after one’s having recited verses.” Although *gāthā* can mean Vedic verses [1.5.1], in this context, it clearly refers to the Buddha’s verse teachings given to Bhāra, dvāja, but more broadly, it also refers to any kind of Dharma teaching. Hence, as reflected in the Commentary (SnA 152), it is clear that the verse paraphrases the Buddha as saying, “It is improper for me to obtain food as a reward or in exchange for the teaching I have given.”³⁰

2.2 THE 3 THINGS FOR WHICH THE BUDDHA IS BLAME-FREE

2.2.1 (5) The Buddha is one who has well taught the Dharma

2.2.1.1 “That the Tathagata, bhikshus, is one who has well taught the Dharma” [§5]. The Pali definition of the 1st *anupavajja*—the “blame-free” quality of the Buddha—is enigmatic. It runs thus: *Svākkhāta, dhammo bhikkhave tathāgato*. Note that there are two subjects (both in the nominative case): *svākkhāta, dhammo* and *tathāgato*. Ordinarily, we would use the copula or linking verb “is” (*hoti*) and render the sentence as either “The well-taught Dharma, bhikshus, is the Tathāgata” or as “The Tathāgata, bhikshus, is the well-taught Dharma”—which does not make good sense, except in a cryptic cultish way perhaps.

Indeed, there is a third way of translating the sentence, that is, as “That the Tathagata, bhikshus, has well taught the Dharma.” Here, we take *svākkhāta*, not as an adjective, but as the past participle of *akkhāti*, “to make known, announce, teach.”

Alternately, we can read the phrase *svākkhātā* as *su-akkhātā*,³¹ “the one who has well taught (the Dharma).” Thus, we have: “The Tathagata is the one who has well taught the Dharma”—this highlights **the Buddha as the teacher**: the first of the 3 jewels (*ratana*)³² and the first of the 3 refuges (*saraṇa*).³³

²⁹ On the influxes (*āsava*), see (1.2.3.1 (10) n).

³⁰ See SD 37.8 (1.4.3 + 1.5.1).

³¹ On *akkhātā* (sg), cf *akkhātāro tathāgatā* (pl), “The Tathagatas are teachers [way-showers]” (Dh 276b). We are exhorted to do our part as his student: “You must make the effort!” (*tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ*) (Dh 276a).

³² On the 3 jewels, see SD 47.1 (3.2.2.1); SD 51.8 (1.3.3.1).

³³ On going for refuge, see SD 45.11 (3).

Having understood the sentence in these ways, we have rendered it as “**That the Tathāgata, bhikshus, is the one who has well taught the Dharma.**” The conjunction “that” starts off this noun phrase, linking it to the preceding question. Even without “that,” it still makes sense as a sentence. This syntax is vital to the context—it is the **Tathāgata** or the Buddha that is highlighted here. No one can find fault in the fact that he is the Buddha. In this sense, the Buddha is blameless (*anupavajja*).

2.2.2 (6) The well taught way leading to nirvana

2.2.2.1 “**That the way [the practice],** bhikshus, leading to nirvana has been well declared ...” [§9]. The Buddha is not only himself awakened and liberated, but he teaches us—from his own experience of awakening—how we can awaken, too. Like any kind of effective training, he teaches this **Dharma** (Pali, *dhamma*)—the reality he has discovered, the truth he has formulated, and the teaching he has given us—is gradual. This basically refers to the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t, taya*) of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, which are the bases for right awakening, and the right knowledge and vision of such an awakening.³⁴

2.2.2.2 The word *buddha* simply means “awakened” (to true reality and liberated from suffering). As an adjective, “awakened” (*buddha*)—its more familiar noun is *bodhi*, “awakening”—means that the awakening and liberation of both the Buddha and the arhats are the same: this is the singular “taste of freedom” (*vimutti, rasa*)—as famously declared in **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58). The only difference is that the Buddha arises first, in the sense that he discovers the way of awakening, and then teaches it to others, his disciples (*sāvaka*), who follow it.³⁵

2.2.2.3 The term *sambuddha* is best translated as “self-awakened,” rather than “fully awakened,” which is actually *sammā, sambuddha*, “the fully self-awakened one.” To be self-awakened means that we are capable of making our own efforts in seeking spiritual awakening and liberation. Of course, it is possible that an awakened being can awaken another—the Buddha is recorded to have given teachings where the listener becomes an arhat. It is not that the Buddha *creates* the arhat, but rather his words—the Dharma—guides the ready disciple or listener (both represented by the word *sāvaka*) to see within himself that awakening to true reality.³⁶

2.2.2.4 **The fully self-awakened one** (*sammā, sambuddha*) is a unique being, the highest evolved being during a specific world-period. Hence, it makes sense that there is only *one* such being—he discovers the Dharma-wheel and turns it. This wheel is the liberating path that whose journey prepares us for the goal of nirvana.

Hence, the fully self-awakened buddha³⁷ and **the buddha-dhamma** are effectively the same in the sense that the Buddha is the embodiment of the Dharma: his actions (compassion), speech (wisdom) and mind (awakening) are all Dharma: a communication of true reality for our benefit, a call for us to head for the path of awakening and behind our liberating journey.

It is vital not to misconstrue such a statement to mean that the Buddha is some kind of cosmic reality or comes from a cosmic Dharmakāya or Godhead. It is simply a linguistic statement of a supralinguistic

³⁴ On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā*, SD 21.8. For the whole process of the noble path, see *Ariya atṭh’-aṅgika magga*, SD 10.16.

³⁵ S 22.58/3:65 f (SD 49.10).

³⁶ A good example is Sāriputta’s awakening, recorded in **Dīgha, nakha S** (M 74,14), SD 16.1.

³⁷ This phrase, although the word “Buddha” is redundant, is helpful in reminding us of the Pali word itself.

truth: this *dharmakaya* (“dharma-body”) of the Buddha is simply an “intentional term”³⁸ or metaphor for non-self and our understanding of it.³⁹

2.2.2.5 So, too, when there is **the fully self-awakened buddha**, there is also the true Dharma (*saddhamma*), the teaching and the path of awakening. The term *dharmā* has the broadest range of meanings in religious language.⁴⁰ While the class-minded elitist brahmins used **Dharma** to mean “social duty,” a kind of Confucianist class awareness and deference to hierarchy and power, the Buddha rejects this social measuring of persons according to birth and position.

In the Buddha’s teaching, Dharma means true reality and social justice, where we are what we do, say and think. **Karma** (Pali *kamma*) is not right ritual action (again, a kind of Confucian proper deferential and ritual action) but our intention. On a social level, we should be restrained by moral virtue (founded on the values of life, happiness, freedom, truth and liberation), and personally or psychologically, we should cultivate wisdom and compassion for the common good and happiness.

2.2.2.6 The Dharma—as true reality (impermanence, suffering and non-self) and true teaching (the path of awakening)—is above even the Buddha himself—as stated in **the Gāraṇa Sutta** (S 6.2).⁴¹ The brahminical Dharma is where the Person (the brahmins as a class or church) defines truth, reality, God; in the Buddha Dharma reality awakens us, truth frees us—by understanding what is *real* and living by what is *true*.

Since the Dharma—the Dharma as true reality and the path of awakening—is *above* the Buddha, then, even after the Buddha dies or when there is no Buddha, the Dharma is always there—*whether buddhas arise or not, the reality remains that all things are impermanent and unsatisfactory; that the principles behind all things are non-self*.⁴²

The Dharma is with us when we undertake the path, that is, a life of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom. We can still *see* the Buddha when we *see* the Dharma—“who sees Dharma sees me,” declares the Buddha to Vakkali⁴³—when we carefully and lovingly search and study the suttas and apply their truths.

2.2.3 (7) The assemblies of the Buddha’s disciples

2.2.3.1 “Countless hundreds, bhikshus, are the assemblies of my disciples ... ” [§13]. When there is the Buddha—the fully self-awakened one—there is the Dharma to which he fully awakens and teaches the path of awakening for our benefit. When we properly practise the path, even as we journey on it, we begin to taste its freedom, and then there are those who have reached the journey’s end, nirvana—the buddha-like arhats.

³⁸ On “intentional language,” see SD 26.11 (6.5); Dh 97 SD 10.6 esp (5).

³⁹ On nonself (*anattā*), see **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134/1:286), SD 26.8.

⁴⁰ See, eg, J R Carter, “Traditional definitions of the term dhamma.” *Philosophy East and West* 26,3 July 1976:329-337. <http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-PHIL/carter.htm>; Carter, *Dhamma: Western academic and Sinhalese Buddhist interpretations*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1978. Rev George D Bond, *Journal of the International Assoc of Buddhist Studies* 8,2 1985:135-137.

⁴¹ S 6.2/1:138-140 (SD 12.3).

⁴² **Dhamma Niyāma S** (A 3.134/1:286), SD 26.8.

⁴³ *Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati: Vakkali S* (S 22.87,13/3:120), SD 8.8; Miln 71; SA 2:252; AA 1:250; DhA 4:118; UA 311; ItA 2:116; ThaA 2:147; ApA 492. See SD 10.4 (2.2.5).

Anyone—monastic or lay—who practises the Dharma, who walks the path, will approach awakening and liberation. Hence, the suttas tell us of streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats in **the 4 assemblies** (*parisā*) of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.⁴⁴

2.2.3.2 We awaken or begin to awaken *not* because of our life-style or the uniform we assume. **We awaken on account of our willingness to renounce the world**, whether we are monastic or lay. Becoming a monastic, legally and technically, gives us the best opportunities and conditions for awakening in this life itself. When we betray our vows or are indolent in our avowed practice, then we are simply a worldling in fancy dress—or, worse, we are simply misleading the world feigning to be living the holy life (*brahma, cariya*) when we are not. **The Āsaṃsa Bhikkhu Sutta** (A 3.13) declares that we are then “hopeless” (*nirāsa*). It is, of course, never too late for us to turn away from the wrong way and head for the noble path even right now—then we are said to be “hopeful” (*āsaṃsa*).⁴⁵

2.2.3.3 Renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is not merely “leaving home” for a royal life in a palatial home, but truly letting go of the world—hence, we are said to “renounce the world.” Since, on the one hand, the monastic crowd has mostly turned to priestcraft and living secular lives, flooded by money, socializing, social work and worldliness, and on the other hand, Buddhism has been hijacked by populist teachers, cultish gurus and elitist talkers—we have only the Dharma to turn to. In an important sense, the Buddha knows that Buddhism will take such a turn, and he has handed the Dharma down in such a way that we will inherit only through our renunciation.⁴⁶

2.2.3.4 True renunciation must and can be practised in 3 stages: those of the body, the mind and the world.

(1) **Renouncing the body** begins with *right speech*⁴⁷—above all observing the *silence* when there is no good reason to speak. When we are ready for meditation, we prepare ourself as instructed in **the Anāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 118), thus:

“Here ... a monk⁴⁸ who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty place, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.”
(M 118,17/3:82), SD 7.13⁴⁹

(2) **Renouncing the mind** begins with letting go of whatever views we have and ignoring all the doubts we have for the moment, as we begin to meditate. If we have learned from the suttas what our senses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—really are and how they work, then it is easier to let go of **sensual desire**, the 1st hindrance to meditation: they are called “hindrance” because they distract us from directing our mind to meditative peace.⁵⁰

Lovingkindness is a vital catalyst for good meditation, especially since it makes us joyful. It’s easier to meditate—or do any good, such as keeping the precepts—when we are joyful. It also rids our mind (at least temporarily) of **ill will**, the 2nd mental hindrance.

⁴⁴ See **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 13,2.5-2.7), SD 9.

⁴⁵ A 3.13,6 + SD 51.18 (2.4.1.4).

⁴⁶ This is not to deny that there are still good monastics. They live like rare diamonds amongst the Ganges sand, and we must look for them, learn from them, support them as we can—and rejoice in their presence.

⁴⁷ On right speech, see SD 10.16 (3).

⁴⁸ “A monk” (*bhikkhu*) means either (1) anyone listening attentively (SD 46.18 (2.1.3.2)), or (2) anyone properly meditating (**Satipaṭṭhāna Ss**, SD 13.1 (3.1.1)).

⁴⁹ For refs, see **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,12.2) n, SD 10.13.

⁵⁰ On letting go of sensual pleasures, see (**Mahānāma**) **Gilāyana S** (S 55.54,6-9). SD 4.10.

Sloth and torpor will naturally arise because of our bodily needs. Hence, we should not take too much food, and rest properly. Meditating facing some kind of natural brightness helps to keep us awake. The perceptions of light (*āloka,saññā*)⁵¹ or of space (*ākāsa,saññā*)⁵² also help.

Restlessness and guilt arise when our mind looks at the past (with guilt or regret) or into the future (with plans and expectations). Simply “filtering” them away by labelling them as “thinking,” and so on, may help.⁵³ It’s good to get some proper training from an experienced teacher to learn such skills.

Doubt may arise as our mind clears up: we begin to question even some views we are so certain of. We should determine to set aside such doubts (maybe note them down somewhere) to be clarified at the right time. Doubts about our own practice may arise, too: they should simply be labelled as “thoughts.”

(3) “**Renouncing the world**” is a special attitude that can help us improve our meditation and also our quality of life. At the end of our meditation session, as part of the “review,” we should reflect on how we are really living our life, how to be truly happy, especially by letting go of habits and things we do not really need. We may even consider avoiding false friends, if they really trouble us (but always send them a lot of lovingkindness). Basically, this means understanding the difference between *having* and *being*. Reflect, for example, “If I am what I *have*, and I lose what I have, what am I then?” What we have is always external to us, not really ours. Only what we really are that matters—this is what we must work at: that we are able to see true reality in life, and yet simply happy and well liberated.

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Arakkheyya Sutta

The Discourse on No Need to Hide

A 7.55

1 “Bhikshus, there are these 4 things about which the Tathagata **has nothing to hide**, and these 3 things for which **he is blame-free**.⁵⁴

The 4 things of a Tathagata that are transparent⁵⁵ (*arakkheyya*)

2 What are the 4 things about which that the Tathagata **has nothing to hide**?

(1) The Tathagata, bhikshus, is one whose **bodily conduct is pure**.

There is *no bodily misconduct* of the Tathagata that he should hide, thinking, ‘Let no one know about this!’

(2) The Tathagata, bhikshus, is one whose **verbal conduct is pure**.

There is *no verbal misconduct* of the Tathagata that he should hide, thinking, ‘Let no one know about this!’

⁵¹ **Pacala S** (A 7.58,7), SD 4.11; SD 49.5b (1.0.3).

⁵² See SD 49.5b (1.0.1.4). It is best to learn these simple meditations from an experienced meditation teacher.

⁵³ **Filtering** is a set of meditative techniques for removing distractions, the key method of which is “**labelling**”: see SD 13.1 (3.9.1.2); SD 15.1 (7.2.4); SD 38.5 (3.2.3.4).

⁵⁴ *Cattārīmāni bhikkhave tathāgatassa arakkheyyāni tīhi ca* anupavajjo.* Ee Se arakkheyyāni tīhi ca ; Ce:T(urnour) --yyānī ti ca. Ce:T anupavajjā ; Ee Se anupavajjo.*

⁵⁵ The whole section is quoted in SnA 37,22-30 and SA 1:277,14-23.

(3) The Tathagata, bhikshus, is one whose **mental conduct is pure**.

There is *no mental misconduct* of the Tathagata that he should hide, thinking, ‘Let no one know about this!’

(4) The Tathagata, bhikshus, is one whose **livelihood is pure**.

There is *no wrong livelihood* of the Tathagata that he should hide, thinking, ‘Let no one know about this!’

3 These are the 4 things about which the Tathagata has nothing to hide.

The 3 things of which the Tathagata is blame-free (anupavajja)

4 What are the 3 things for which he is **blame-free?** [83]

(5) THE BUDDHA AS THE TEACHER OF SELF-AWAKENING

5 That **the Tathagata**, bhikshus, is one who has well taught the Dharma.⁵⁶

6 Here, indeed, I see no ground, bhikshus, on which any recluse or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or anyone else in the world could justly accuse me, thus:

7 ‘Such and such is the reason⁵⁷ that **the Dharma is not well taught by you**.’⁵⁸

8 Not seeing any such ground, bhikshus, I dwell accomplished in security, accomplished in fearlessness, accomplished in intrepidity [moral courage].⁵⁹

(6) THE DHARMA AS THE WAY TO SELF-AWAKENING

9 That the way [the practice], bhikshus, **leading to nirvana** has been well declared [well defined] by me to my disciples, practising which, my disciples will, having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, attain and dwell in the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.⁶⁰

10 Here, indeed, I see no ground, bhikshus, on which any recluse or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or anyone else in the world could justly accuse me, thus:

11 ‘Such and such is the reason that the way leading to nirvana **has not been well declared** by you to your disciples,⁶¹ practising which, your disciples will, having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, attain and dwell in the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.’

⁵⁶ Svākkhāta,dhammo* bhikkhave tathāgato. Be:M Be:Ph -to dh- throughout; Be:M8 svākhyāto dh-; Ee Se svākkhāta,dhammo. See (2.2.1.1).

⁵⁷ “Such and such is the reason,” *iti pi* [also §§11+15]. Usually *iti*, as ‘*ti*’, marks the end of a quote, or highlighted phrase or word (see DPL 162). Here, however, it starts off a notable remark.

⁵⁸ *Iti pi te* na svākkhāta,dhammo*’ti*. Ee *iti pi te*; Be:M8 has *so* instead of *te*; Se *iti pi tvarṇ*. Be:M8 svākhvāto dh-; Ee Se svākkhāta,dhammo.

⁵⁹ *Nimittam etaṃ bhikkhave na samanupassāmi, etaṃ p’ahaṃ bhikkhave nimittam asamanupassanto khema-p,-patto abhaya-p,-patto vesārajjā-p,-patto viharāmi*. This is stock: **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12.30/1:72), SD 49.1; **(Catukka) Vesārajjā S** (A 4.8,2-5/2:9×4), SD 51.19. On the Buddha as an effective teacher, see Miln 169 f.

⁶⁰ *Supaññattā kho pana me bhikkhave sāvakānaṃ nibbana,gāminī paṭipadā, yathā* paṭipannā mama sāvakā āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetō,vimuttiṃ paññā,vimuttiṃ diṭṭh’eva dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharanti**. *Be:T Ce:M6 *yatthā* ; Ee Se *yathā*. *Be:T Ce:M6 Ce:M7 *viharati*; Ee Se *viharanti*.

⁶¹ *Iti pi te na supaññatta sāvakānaṃ nibbana,gāminī paṭipadā*. Be Ee Se *tava sāvakā*; Ce *tathāgata,sāvakā*.

12 Not seeing any such ground, bhikshus, I dwell accomplished in security, accomplished in fearlessness, accomplished in intrepidity.

(7) THE NOBLE SANGHA AS THE SELF-AWAKENED

13 Countless hundreds, bhikshus, are **the assemblies of my disciples** who, having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, attained and dwelled in the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.

14 Here, indeed, I see no ground, bhikshus, on which any recluse or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or anyone else in the world could justly accuse me, thus:

15 ‘Such and such is the reason that **there are not countless hundreds who are the assemblies of your disciples⁶²** *who, having right here and now realized for themselves through direct knowledge, attained and dwelled in the freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.*’

16 Not seeing any such ground, bhikshus, **[84]** I dwell accomplished in security, accomplished in fearlessness, accomplished in intrepidity.

17 These are the 3 things for which he is blame-free.

18 These, bhikshus, are the 4 things of the Tathagata that he does not need to hide, and the 3 things for which he is blame-free.

— evaṃ —

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⁶² *Iti pi te na aneka,satā sāvaka,parisā.*